

BRINGING THE FAIR TRADE AGENDA TO THE STATE CAPITOL

During this past year, the California Senate Select Committee on International Trade Policy and State Legislation has worked to foster discussion in the state capitol about the impacts of free trade policy on state laws. Created last year by retired state Senator Tom Hayden, the committee is now chaired by Senator Sheila Kuehl. The committee was established to assess the full impact of trade agreements, such as the WTO, NAFTA, and the pending FTAA, on California's statutes and regulations and to develop an oversight and advice role for state legislators.

Trade and investment agreements limit the sovereignty of American states. Rather than a conflict between "free trade" and "protectionism," the real battle is over the protection of regulatory balance, including regulation to protect ecosystems, human health, product safety and other traditional objectives of democratic governance. The trade law system constructed in these agreements is explicitly designed to place enforceable restrictions on the ability of local, state and national governments to enforce laws designed to advance goals important to their constituencies.

On Wednesday, September 5, the Committee is inviting human rights and consumer safety activists and environmentalists, as well as fair trade and labor advocates, to the state Capitol in Sacramento to lobby state legislators and urge them to pay attention to this important area by ensuring that trade agreements receive the intense scrutiny, diligent oversight and public participation that they deserve. As trade policy rapidly impacts more and more areas of our lives, it is important to scrutinize these policies so as not to jeopardize our hard fought-for laws.

We will also be advocating the passage of two important bills, SB 1044 and SB 1111. These bills would require the California Director of Industrial Relations (SB 1044) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (SB 1111) to assess potentially negative impacts on the state's labor and environmental laws created by trade agreements.

From 9-11 a.m. in the Capitol, Room 2040 will hold a legislative briefing with Senator Sheila Kuehl, which will include lobby training and policy and legislative background. We will then spend the rest of the day meeting with legislators and their staff.

Please join us in educating state legislators and their staff about the potentially far-reaching impacts of international trade agreements on our state and local laws.

Please call us for more information about this lobbying day at (916) 322-8616. We will be providing background information and educational materials prior to the event. Looking forward to seeing you.

